

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MADRID

UNCLAS STATE 049486

FOL SENT ALL EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS ALL NATO
CAPITALS GENEVA HELSINKI VIENNA MARCH 16, 1973 FROM SECSTATE
WASHDC REPEATED TO YOU QUOTE

UNCLAS STATE 049486

E. O. 11652: N/ A

TAGS: MARR, US

SUBJECT: RESOLUTION OF SENATE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 048398

AT WHITE HOUSE NEWS CONFERENCE MARCH 16, PRESS SECRETARY
ZIEGLER RESPONDED TO QUESTIONS CONCERNING SUBJECT OF
REFTEL. THE RELEVANT SECTION OF THE TRANSCRIPT FOLLOWS:

THE BRIEFING IS NOT OVER, BECAUSE I DO HAVE A COMMENT.

Q EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO ASK THE QUESTION YOURSELF?

MR. ZIEGLER: EVEN IF I HAVE TO ASK THE QUESTION
MYSELF, AND THAT GOES TO THE SENATE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE
PROPOSAL YESTERDAY WHICH RELATED TO SUBSTANTIAL REDUCTION
OF AMERICAN FORCES ABROAD OVER THE NEXT 18 MONTHS. THIS,
OF COURSE, IS A NEW VARIANT OF PROPOSALS THAT HAVE BEEN
REPEATHDLY DEFEATED IN THE CONGRESS.

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I WOULD LIKE TO AGAIN RESTATE THE POSITION OF THIS ADMINISTRATION, THAT WE AND OUR ALLIES ARE NOW ENGAGED WITH COUNTRIES IN THE WARSAW PACT IN TALKS ON MUTUAL BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS, AND IT WOULD MAKE NO SENSE AT ALL TO REDUCE OUR FORCES AT THE OUTSET OF THE NEGOTIATIONS THAT MAY LEAD TO A MORE STABLE BALANCE IN EUROPE.

THE PROPOSALS IN THIS RESOLUTION BY THE SENATE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE, WE FEEL, ARE UNWISE. A MAJORITY OF THE SENATE HAS SUPPORTED THE POSITION THAT UNILATERAL FORCE REDUCTIONS ARE NOT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE UNITED STATES, PARTICULARLY AS WE ARE PROCEEDING WITH THE MUTUAL BALANCED FORCE REDUCTION DISCUSSIONS WITH OUR ALLIES AND WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES.

THE FORCES THAT WE MAINTAIN OVERSEAS ARE THERE IN SUPPORT OF OUR SECURITY COMMITMENTS AND INTERESTS. THE LEVEL AND COMPOSITION OF OUR FORCES AND THE BASIS TO SUPPORT THEM HAVE BEEN AND WILL BE ADJUSTED AS STRATEGIC AND POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES CHANGE, BUT ALWAYS AS A REFLECTION OF THOSE INTERESTS AND COMMITMENTS.

THE PRESIDENT HAS MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE UNITED STATES WILL MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE ITS FORCES IN EUROPE PROVIDED OUR ALLIES DO LIKEWISE, AND THAT UNILATERAL REDUCTION OF U. S. FORCES AT THIS POINT IS UNWISE AND THAT THE PROPOSALS CONTAINED IN THE SENATE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE PROPOSAL ARE UNWISE.

Q. RON, ON THOSE TALKS, CAN YOU CONFIRM REPORTS OR RUMORS, REALLY, THAT WE HAVE SUGGESTED THAT THE SOVIETS PULL BACK FOUR OF THEIR TROOPS FOR EVERY ONE OF OURS RETURNED HOME?

MR. ZIEGLER: I AM NOT GOING TO GET INTO THE DETAILS OF THE MBFR NEGOTIATIONS OR RESPOND TO QUESTIONS SUCH AS THAT. I JUST WANTED TO TAKE THE OPPORTUNITY THIS MORNING, BECAUSE THIS IS A PROPOSAL THAT WAS VOTED ON IN THE SENATE DEMOCRATIC CONFERENCE, TO RESTATE OUR POSITION, WHICH HAS BEEN A CONSISTENT POSITION, TO REDUCE OUR FORCES ARBITRARILY AND UNILATERALLY, REGARDLESS OF THE STRATEGIC UNCLASSIFIED

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AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS INVOLVED, WOULD BE COMPLETELY

IRRESPONSIBLE.

Q. A RELATED QUESTION. SENATOR HOWARD BAKER IS GOING TO NATO COUNTRIES, TO BE CALLING ON THEM FOR ATOMIC ENERGY MATTERS, I BELIEVE, BEGINNING THIS SUNDAY. IS THE PRESIDENT GOING TO TALK TO HIM BEFORE HE GOES ON THIS TRIP; DO YOU KNOW?

MR. ZIEGLER: I DON' T KNOW.

Q. DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ON THE BREZHNEV VISIT OR THE PRESIDENT' S PRE- SUMMER TRAVEL PLANS?

MR. ZIEGLER: NO, I DON' T. A DATE HAS NOT BEEN SET YET.

Q. RON, I THINK THERE IS A PROPOSAL, ALSO, FOR WITHDRAWAL OF ALL AMERICAN FORCES FROM ASIA. DO YOU HAVE A COMMENT ON THAT?

MR. ZIEGLER: THE VIEW THAT WE HOLD ON THE MATTER RELATING TO ASIA, WHICH I THINK WAS A COMMENT MANSFIELD PUT FORTH, IS THE SAME PHILOSOPHY WE HOLD, AND WHICH I HAVE STATED, IN TERMS OF EUROPE. ROGERS UNQUOTE ROGERS

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